

2014 Abortion Report

Columbus again leads state in reducing abortions

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) recently released the [2014 Ohio Abortion Report](#). The report gives us a glimpse into the status of abortion in our state and community, and provides us with the ability to look at long and short range trends. The abortion statistics report is released annually, and the information it must contain is described in state statute. The report covers the prior calendar year (January 1 - December 31) and must be released no later than October 1st. The data contains information only on women having abortions in Ohio and does not include information on women who may cross state lines to have an abortion. It reports information including the mother's age, marital status, prior abortions or live births, the gestational age of the fetus, the method of abortion, and other information. Some of the data may not be exact due to errors in reporting or incorrect information provided, and from year to year there are differences in how complete the data set is.

We've taken a closer look at the 2014 figures and, in some cases, compared them to those produced in [2013](#). While it can be tempting to look at numbers in the short term to find either encouragement or discouragement, we are cautious about placing too much confidence – or despair – in short term trends. We are grateful for every child spared for abortion, but there is still a lot of work left to do, and we cannot do it without a community-wide commitment.

Abortion in Central Ohio

When we look at abortion in central Ohio, we look at it in two ways. The first is by the county where the abortion was performed. In 2014 there were only 7 counties in Ohio where abortions were performed, and in one of those counties there was only one abortion. The six counties where abortion clinics are operating generally align with the metro areas: Cuyahoga (Cleveland), Franklin (Columbus), Hamilton (Cincinnati), Lucas (Toledo), Montgomery (Dayton), and Summit (Akron). We also look at abortion by the county of mother's residence, specifically those within the area where our members live. Greater Columbus Right to Life includes the Greater Columbus Metropolitan Statistical Area: Franklin, Delaware, Union, Madison, Pickaway, Fairfield, Licking, and Morrow Counties.

Overall, we are incredibly joyful that for the second year in a row, Central Ohio has led the state in the reduction of abortion, with 829 fewer abortions in 2014 than in 2013. This represents **more than 40%** of the statewide reduction in abortion. It is a **35% reduction in abortions in central Ohio since 2007**, the year that we started organizing the [40 Days for Life](#) program and a **27% reduction in abortion since 2012**, the year that we began our [sidewalk counseling](#) program. Most abortions in Columbus were performed surgically (3928), although about five percent were medical abortions (213). Mifepristone was used in most medical abortions (190). Misoprostol was used in 139 medical abortions. One abortion reported the use of methotrexate and 7 reported other non-surgical methods. More than one chemical can be used in a medical abortion. In January of 2014 there were three abortion clinics operating in Columbus, but by the end of August 2014 one had stopped performing abortions. While we continue to monitor that facility, there has been no credible evidence that it is still performing surgical or medical abortions. While some of the reduction in abortions could be attributed this clinic's closure, three things suggest this is not entirely the case: 1 – the clinic in question was the smallest clinic by volume of abortions, 2 – the clinic stopped performing abortions in the last four months of the year, and

3- traditionally abortion levels are at their lower numbers statewide in the last part of the year. None of those would account for a reduction of more than 800 abortions. Moreover, an honest look at the impact of clinic closures and abortion rates in Ohio suggests that closing a clinic in an area where there are other nearby clinics appears to have less effect on the overall abortion rate, which makes sense especially if the other clinics have the capacity to absorb patients.

Overall, the total number of abortions declined in all but two of the counties in our region.

Franklin County abortions fell by 72 to 3376, Delaware fell by 4 to 141, Union fell by 20 to 27, Morrow fell by 10 to 11, Fairfield fell by 8 to 136, and Licking fell by 24 to 153. Madison increased abortions by 13 to 34 and Pickaway increased by 8 to 47.

The detailed statistical data available is generally broken down by county of the mother's residence, rather than by county where the abortion occurred so it can be a little more difficult to draw conclusions about the women having abortions in Columbus. If we look to Franklin County as a bellwether of the region (it may not be), we see a significantly higher percentage of abortions being performed on minority women than statewide. In Franklin County, 42.5% of women having abortions identified as White, 44% of women having abortions identified as Black, and about 14% identified as "Other" ethnicity, mixed ethnicity, or did not report their ethnicity. While it is true that Franklin County has a higher minority population than the state as a whole, even when taking into account the population differences, it is still true that minorities are more heavily represented in abortions than the general populations. For example, US Census data indicates that about 20% of women in the Franklin County of child-bearing age are African-American, although 44% of the children aborted would have been born to black mothers. This abortion rate is clearly disproportionate, but generally mirrors the ethnic distribution in recent years.

Abortion in Ohio

Overall, abortions declined in Ohio for the second year in a row to 21,186. This is a reduction of 2,030 abortions from 2013. Since 2001, abortions have declined by an average of 1000 per year, although the rates have varied from year to year. The 2014 statistic represents an all-time low since the inception of the reports. About 94.5% of the women having abortions in Ohio reported living in Ohio. We do not know the number living in Ohio who had abortions in another state, but anecdotal evidence, such as [newspaper reports](#), suggests that some clinics near Ohio have seen an increase in Ohio women seeking abortions in that state when nearby Ohio abortion clinics closed. This anecdotal estimation appears to match 2014 abortion statistics from Michigan, which show a significant growth in women coming from out-of-state to have abortions in Michigan¹. Moreover, there is apparent correlation to abortion decline in NW Ohio. Again, because none of our surrounding states provide information on Ohio women having procedures in the state, this is merely speculative. It also is not clear how the information compares with the number of women having abortions in Ohio who are residents of another

¹ In 2012, Michigan reported 531 women from out of state having an abortion, roughly 2.3% of the total number of abortions. This figure was generally the same in 2009, 2010, and 2011 where the percentage varied by no more than a tenth of a percent per year. In 2013, the overall abortion rate in Michigan dramatically increased, as did the number of women coming to Michigan to have an abortion (708 and 2.7%). In 2014, the Michigan abortion rate again increased from 26,120 to 27,629. The number of women from out of state dramatically increased (1308 or 4.7%). Source: Michigan Abortion Report for 2014. Available at: <http://www.mdch.state.mi.us/pha/osr/abortion/Intro.asp>

state, it does not account for differences in how data is collected (for example how a college student might be recorded), or the variance from year to year in capturing accurate data for all women. This is part of the reason that we are cautious when talking about abortion “victories.”

Statewide, we saw that the breakdown in abortion by race remained almost identical to that of 2013 by percentage of abortions: 51.7 percent of women having abortions identified as white, 42.2% as black (reduction of 0.2%), 0.2% as American Indian, 3.1% Asian/Pacific Islander (0.2 increase), and 2.8% Multi-Race. There were some changes in the marital status of women having abortions, although the numbers were difficult to compare with any degree of confidence because while the total abortion rate declined from 2013 to 2014, a significant number of the 2014 reports (2725 in 2014 compared to 1261 in 2013) did not include information on marital status. Overall, single women who report never having been married were the most likely to have an abortion (69% of all abortions). About ten percent of those having abortions were married. Others reported being separated, divorced, widowed, or non-responsive.

Ohio law generally prohibits pregnancy after the baby is viable. Ohio law presumes viability at 24 weeks and requires some additional viability testing after 20. Because of this, we have a much smaller number of abortions after 20 weeks than other states. In 2014, there were 133 abortions at 21 weeks and over, a reduction of 40 from the prior year. The abortions in most gestational ranges stayed about the same as 2013, and surprisingly the number of abortions from 9-12 weeks gestation were identical in 2013 and 2014. The only significant change in the number of abortions by gestational age was in those abortion ended prior to 9 weeks. In fact, Ohio’s reduction in abortions is due to the decline in abortions < 9 weeks. Even with the decline, abortions prior to 9 weeks represent 52% of all Ohio abortions. Medical (chemical) abortions² slightly declined in Ohio: in 2014, 1084 abortions were non-surgical (1,102 in 2013). Most abortions in Ohio are also performed in an ambulatory surgical facility. In 2014 only 84 were performed in a hospital setting (89 in 2013).

Thoughts and an Invitation

There are a few things to consider whenever we look at abortion statistics. The first is that we are incredibly joyful at the reduction in abortions, and in many ways that joy should not be mitigated by trying to identify how or why. Every life is a gift from God, and we should give thanks, recognizing that our hands may do the work, but what we do is in His name. Every time our volunteers empower a woman to turn away from an abortion clinic, we give thanks and pray for that action, that woman, her child, and the volunteers involved. If 99 women continue in to their abortions, we can find joy and thanksgiving for the one who turned away, and our joy for that woman and for her child should not be less because another did not choose life. That is the same spirit with which we approach the abortion reduction. We may use the number “829” as a representative figure, but we are truly giving thanks for an unknown number whose lives are touched by the work of the prolife community every year. At Greater Columbus Right to Life, we focus on changing the culture for Life by grassroots education and advocacy in our families, our churches, and our communities. We have a special focus on prayer, especially prayer in community at the clinics where we can be a visible witness to Truth while acting in

²Many people object to hormonal contraceptives and certain IUDs for religious reasons or out of a concern of the abortifacient element involved. Our volunteers do not refer for hormonal contraception. However, for the purpose of Ohio law and this discussion, a medical or chemical abortion involves the intentional ending of an established pregnancy following a positive pregnancy test. It does not include the use of contraception or emergency contraception.

Love. We welcome people of all faiths who are willing to stand with us in defense of a culture of life and who are willing to pray peacefully for an end to abortion. We know that what we are doing is having an effect, even though we cannot know the exact number of lives we have touched this side of Heaven, and we know that what we are doing has value even if it is not reflected in the statistic of abortion decline.

We may look at statistics and trends in the short term or the long term, and we can identify more or less effective strategies, but we must never lose sight of our goal, our vision, and our fundamental principles. We cannot further dehumanize the aborted child by thinking of him or her as a statistic. He is not a rallying cry to our volunteers, and she is not a fundraising appeal to a donor. They and their mothers are not tools in political agendas. Statistics are only helpful as long as they represent something real. We do need volunteers, our work requires financial support, and policy is critical to the defense of human life, but we can never let ourselves forget, even momentarily, that we are not scrambling for statistics: we are cooperating with the redemption of the world. They are not victories. They are not setbacks. They are people made in the image and likeness of God, and they have stories that will be told – or not told, based on the actions – or inactions, of the people in our community.

There are many who are doing good work in central Ohio and throughout the state, and we embrace the fact that we are called to serve the prolife movement in different ways and in different capacities and with different strategies. It is undeniable that Greater Columbus Right to Life is touching hearts, changing minds, and saving lives. We would like to invite you to join us.

We serve as a visible witness to the truth in central Ohio. Our goal is to be steadfast and faithful witnesses to the dignity of all human life; our vision is to see an end to abortion in central Ohio by the year 2020; and our fundamental principles are that each person is made in the image and likeness of God and that we must defend innocent human life from the moment of conception until natural death. We thank God that Columbus saw a decline of 829 abortions from the prior year, even as we mourn the 4137 children whose lives are now measured as a statistic. This is bittersweet, at best. If, however, we humble ourselves to faithfully do God's work – not because we want better statistics than last year, but because we love God and this is what He has commanded of us and for us, then we are confident that we will see true victory.

1 What causes wars, and what causes fightings among you? Is it not your passions that are at war in your members? **2** You desire and do not have; so you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain; so you fight and wage war. You do not have, because you do not ask. **3** You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. **4** Unfaithful creatures! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. **5** Or do you suppose it is in vain that the scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit which he has made to dwell in us"? **6** But he gives more grace; therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." **7** Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. **8** Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you men of double mind. **9** Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to dejection. **10** Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you. **11** Do not speak evil against one another, brethren. He that speaks evil against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. **12** There is one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you that you judge your neighbor? **13** Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and get gain"; **14** whereas you do not know about tomorrow. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. **15** Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and we shall do this or that." **16** As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. **17** Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

~ James, Ch 4 RSV